

KANSAS CITY DISTRICT'S NEWS MAGAZINE

HEARTLAND ENGINEER



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SPRING 2008

A photograph of a Native American man in traditional regalia, including a large feathered headdress and circular medallions, holding a young child. The background shows a blue tarp and greenery.

**District works with
Tribal Governments**

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Col. Steven R. Miles, Northwestern Division commander, meets with Soldiers at 1st Division Headquarters.

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HEARTLAND ENGINEER 

SPRING 2008
VOL. 6, NO. 1

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ON THE COVER: Colorful traditional Native American garb was in evidence at the 2007 Iowa Tribe Pow Wow. Photo by Harry Weddington.

The second hundred years ...

Forging ahead in the spirit of cooperation

As you know, the Kansas City District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently celebrated the 100th year of its existence. Over that first century, the Corps always worked to make positive differences in a variety of arenas – in military construction, healthy watersheds, the environment, protecting wildlife, recreation and tourism.



Col. Roger A. Wilson Jr.

But the Corps couldn't accomplish any of its important missions alone. Public-private cooperation has been crucial to many of its success stories in the District over the years. In recent memory, one can find numerous shining examples.

In military construction, there's Fort Leavenworth's impressive Lewis and Clark Center, home to the Command and General Staff College. At Fort Riley, the 1st Division Headquarters building, completed in November 2007, is just one of many examples on post of cooperative efforts between the public and private sectors.

Extensive construction at Fort Leonard Wood and the B2 bomber facilities at Whiteman Air Force Base demonstrate that same spirit of cooperation.

In summary, the District has built some of the finest facilities anywhere for our deserving servicemen and women.

At the other end of the spectrum is the proposed trail for walking, running and biking at Pomme de Terre Lake. The 3.2-mile trail, which should open this spring, combines the efforts of the District, two Hickory County organizations and the local schools. It will give county residents pursuing healthy lifestyles an alternative to sharing local roadways with vehicle traffic.

This is just the start. If anything, such partnerships will become increasingly important as the Corps fashions the second hundred years of its history in Kansas City. With your help, the District's second century will be even more memorable than its first.

Volunteering for GWOT Tours: rewarding, challenging, enriching

By Ron Eschmann, Headquarters

Throughout U.S. history, Army Corps of Engineers civilians have had a proud tradition of stepping up to volunteer for worldwide deployment in support of military operations.

Continuing that tradition, many more have deployed overseas in support of the Global War on Terrorism. This critical mission is not over, and both the Afghanistan Engineer District and the Gulf Region Division are still seeking Corps civilians to fill a multitude of positions.

“At the present time there are over 300 vacancy announcements that are listed on both the Army Civilian Personnel Online and USAJobs Web sites,” said Helen Lenahan, chief, Headquarters Deployment Team. Many of these announcements are listed as “Open Continuous” because of the need to recruit talented, experienced people on an ongoing basis.

“Why volunteer?” said Lenahan. “Serving in Afghanistan or Iraq presents a unique opportunity for professional growth and personal enrichment. Many volunteer because they believe in the Corps rebuilding mission in these countries, or they may volunteer out of sense of patriotic duty, or wanting to help people build a better life and future.”

Additional volunteer benefits and incentives for federal employees may include temporary promotion opportunities; post differential, danger and overtime pay; and separate maintenance allowance, among others.

Lieutenant Col. Kari Otto, AED deputy commander, said, “No matter why you volunteer, it’s very rewarding to be part of such a worthy cause. The projects are fast-paced in Afghanistan, and it’s not uncommon to see a major construction project completed during a six- or 13-month deployment.”

AED maintains its headquarters in Kabul,



Shunte' Gray of the Kansas City District sits on the steps of Qala-i-Jangi Prison in Afghanistan with 1st Lt. Laura Lyons. Gray deployed in October 2007. Courtesy photo

but there are Area and Resident Offices located throughout the country to support the mission. Deployments in Afghanistan offer a wide range of experiences for volunteers to choose from, “and there’s something for everyone,” according to Bruce Huffman, AED Public Affairs officer. Corps employees based in Afghanistan might work out of Kandahar, Bagram, Gardez or Qalat.

GRD headquarters is located in Baghdad and has three district offices located Tikrit, Tallil and at Baghdad International Airport. Each district office has multiple locations that are co-located with coalition forces across Iraq.

While deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, Corps employees will work with coalition partners, the State Department and the host country to build health care clinics, schools, roads, power distribution facilities

and other infrastructure projects.

“GRD is great personal and career experience,” said Col. Gary Pease, chief of staff, GRD. “People assigned here have a level of responsibility and authority well beyond any job they have ever had before.”

GRD employees work complex projects and interface with a wide variety of stakeholders, including Iraqi contractors, Iraqi government officials, coalition partners, U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development employees. “Most importantly,” said Pease, “is that they leave Iraq feeling they have made a vital contribution in the birth of a free and democratic nation, which is essential to the future security of the United States. Additionally, they will grow personally and professionally and return with a real feeling of satisfaction that comes from participating in such an important mission,” he added.

“Our work here in Afghanistan is touching people’s lives in a positive way, and you can see that everywhere you look,” Otto said. “We are doing far more than building structures; we are creating a better future and quality of life for a country that has been at war for over 30 years.” The Corps is providing Afghans with things most people take for granted, such as roads, clean water and adequate health care, Otto said. “You really gain an appreciation for the possessions and opportunities you have as an American when you see someone drink clean water or get health care for the first time in their life,” she said.

People often ask what their home away from home will be like.

“Living conditions in GRD are excellent,” Pease said. All employees get their own room, which usually has a television, DVD player and a bathroom. Also, food and transportation are free. Most GRD locations have gyms, libraries, movies and other opportunities to rest and relax. Also, civilian employees are now authorized three home leaves during a one-year tour. Leave transportation is paid

by the government. Additionally, communication with family and friends is “very easy and convenient,” Pease added.

“Accommodations in Afghanistan are quite nice, with modern dining facilities and nicely equipped gyms and living quarters, although some forward-operating locations can be a bit more rustic,” said Huffman of AED. There are many opportunities for R&R leave and recreation while deployed, and most Corps employees in Afghanistan have phone and Internet access in their individual rooms.

“This has been the most rewarding personal and professional experience I have ever had,” said Curt Heckelman, deputy for Programs and Project

Management, Gulf Region North District.

“You quickly realize that you are a part of something that is much, much larger than any individual effort you have done before now and for me, it has been a great honor.” Heckelman said that every person works at a higher intensity and learns very quickly how to execute at a different level. “The

pace is unrelenting, but it is also energizing. My most memorable experience is having the ability to teach, coach and mentor individuals.”

Currently, both AED and GRD are in need of area, resident and project engineers. Mission-support positions are also available for administrative support, budget analysts, contract specialists, program managers, public affairs specialists and many others. Applicants can self nominate through the Army Vacancy Announcement Board: <http://cpol.army.mil> or at USAJOBS.opm.gov.

USACE officials said that in the near future, AED (<http://www.aed.usace.army.mil>) and GRD (<http://www.grd.usace.army.mil>) will be producing videos that will be available online to highlight civilian employees’ living and work environments.



On the trail to fitness at Pomme de Terre

District joins in partnership with local groups

By *Bob Reinert*

HERMITAGE, Mo. – When the people of Hickory County wanted to go for a walk, run or bike ride in the past, they sometimes had little choice but to share the local roadways with vehicle traffic.

The Kansas City District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, two county organizations and the local schools have combined to change all that by signing a challenge partnership agreement Jan. 7 to build a 3.2-mile multipurpose trail at Outlet Park, just downstream of Pomme de Terre Lake. The trail could open for use this spring.

“It’s not very often that we get to do a project like this,” said Brad Myers, operations manager at Pomme de Terre. “We expect to have a real nice product coming out of this.”

Dennis Wallace, the Corps park manager, said he often sees people walking as he drives to work in the mornings.

“The only place they have to walk in Hickory County ... is the roadways,” Wallace said. “The idea is to give people another opportunity, a place they can come to exercise and be away from vehicle traffic.”

The trail will be made possible by a \$10,000 private grant obtained by the Hickory County Health Department from the Missouri Foundation for Health and another \$10,000 in “Handshake Funding” that the District got through Corps headquarters. The Handshake Funds exist for such partnership projects.

“It’s a handshake, not a handout,” Wallace said. “We are a changing organization. One of the things that’s happened in the last few years is the Corps has



asked us to seek out partners when we have projects we can't do alone. This is exactly the type of project this is."

The Corps and the health department will be joined by the Hickory County Community Improvement Coalition and the Hermitage R-4 Schools in making the trail a reality. The total cost is expected to be \$33,385.

"It's on the outside of what everybody does here, but ... all of us, together, can justify this thing," Wallace said of the partnership. "We've been working on this for several months now. It just takes a while to get everybody together."

The Hermitage High School cross country team proved the viability of the concept last fall by holding a multi-school meet on part of what will become the trail.

Mark Sabala, Heritage's coach, said a number of other coaches later told him that it was the "nicest course in the state. They enjoyed it so much that they've also asked us to host the district cross country meet here next year."

Sabala's team had been practicing at Pomme de Terre for some time, with promising results.

"It's given our athletes a place to run safely instead of running up on the highways and the roads with all the vehicles," Sabala said. "By being able to use these facilities for training, it's allowed us, in a short amount of time, to already have four district championships, two all-state runners, and we're starting to make a lot of noise around the state."

Wallace said that no completion date has been set for the trail project. "I would hope we could have something by spring," Wallace said. "I would hope to make this a fast-paced project. A portion of it's already completed."

The Hermitage cross country team spent last Labor Day removing rocks and downed trees from the trail, which will eventually be 8-10 feet wide and will feature two-inch clean rock and fine limestone aggregate as surface materials. Motorized vehicles will be prohibited from using the trail.

"We want that surface to be ... smooth and firm," Wallace said. "This is more than a nature trail. There (are) already nature trails here. This is for health and fitness."

According to Myers, people are taking advantage of the trail before it opens officially.



Two cross country runners round a corner on part of the Pomme de Terre fitness trail during a high school race there last fall.

Photo by Devin Holt

"This trail, even without being publicized very much or with no signage or anything, is already getting used," Myers said. "Wait until we get the real trail put together. I think it's just going to be very popular."

Lance Hutton, chairman of the Hickory County Community Improvement Coalition, said development of a trail had been under discussion for a while.

"We certainly appreciate it," said Hutton of the trail project. "It's really nice to see our local Corps of Engineers becoming part of the community, and a closer part of the community. It's a blessing."

How will the trail be maintained after it's built?

"I think the Corps of Engineers has a way to maintain this trail at very little cost to the government, and that is through the use of volunteers," Wallace said. "We believe that we'll be able to maintain this thing 100 percent through the use of volunteers."

On hand for the signing ceremony Jan. 7, Col. Roger A. Wilson Jr., commander of the Kansas City District, promised to bring his running shoes in the future and personally try the trail.

"This is going to pay off (in) ... a great benefit to the ... health and wellness and fitness of the community," Wilson said. "It gives you a great opportunity to witness on a personal level the bounty of this great, great property that we've been given to manage for the United States of America."



1st Infantry Division gets new home at Fort Riley



The dedication ceremony for 1st Infantry Division's new \$50 million headquarters at Fort Riley took place Nov. 16, 2007. The building is bristling with state-of-the-art equipment. Photo by L. Joseph Donovan

By L. Joseph Donovan

Fort Riley officially opened the 1st Infantry Division – Big Red One – Headquarters building with a Nov. 16, 2007, ribbon-cutting ceremony. The structure will be home to the division command staff and has space for almost 600 workers.

“The Corps is proud to be a part of the proud history of the 1st Infantry Division through the delivery of this world class facility,” said Steve Iverson, chief of programs and project management for the Kansas City District.

“Today is truly a historic moment.”

*- Maj. Gen. Durbin
Fort Riley commander*

“Today is truly a historic moment,” said Maj. Gen. Robert Durbin, Fort Riley’s commander. “This is a vibrant, powerful and dynamic power-projection platform that has been built on this beautiful, historic post.”

Construction on the \$40 million project started in July 2006 and yielded a 135,000-square-foot facility, consisting of about 6,000 tons of steel and concrete, 66 miles of CAT6 cable, \$3.5 million in furniture and \$1.5 million in audio-visual equipment.

“Sixteen months to complete this project is unheard of in the engineer world,” Iverson said.

In addition, more than 200,000 man-hours went into the project, and there wasn't a single loss-time accident.

"As the design and construction agent, we partnered with the DPW, 1st ID and the contractor, M.A. Mortenson, to get the job done," Iverson said.

This accomplishment was due to a unique contracting method known as "construction manager at-risk." CM@Risk holds the contractor responsible for keeping the project within the agreed-upon budget, and it holds the Corps responsible for keeping the project within the design parameters. It also has been successfully used at Fort Leavenworth and Tuttle Creek to get a building fast.

This unique project provided the Kansas City District with an opportunity to design the building and prove that things can be done faster and cheaper with its internal staff.

"We weren't authorized to start designing the project until March of this year," said Bryan Smith, project manager. "So as soon as we were given the OK, we

took off running. Because we knew the 1st ID needed a move-in date of November 2007, we had to be creative to get it designed and constructed quickly."

This project was a great opportunity for Corps of Engineers designers James Dietz, Jonathan Petry and Irene Freedland. Rather than reviewing someone else's work, they exercised and refined their technical expertise.

The impressive, three-story limestone landmark sits atop a hill, visible for miles in all directions. The large atrium entrance is reminiscent of a private corporation, yet it blends in with its surroundings. The building provides the latest in technology in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and could place it among the finest of the Army's 10 division headquarters.

"With the ribbon-cutting today, it's safe to say that the Big Red One is here to stay," Durbin said. "Today, we make history."



*The \$50 million 1st Division headquarters building at Fort Riley used the "construction manager at risk" method.
Photo by L. Joseph Donovan*



*The Pow Wow Princess dances at the 2007 Iowa Tribe Pow Wow.
Photo by Harry Weddington*

Reservations vibrant, changing places

Drive north from Topeka, the Kansas capital city, and adjacent to the highway you see casinos owned by American Indian Tribes. You might notice signage indicating the locations of Indian reservations. The communities are out of sight in the undulating terrain of prime agricultural land of northeast Kansas and farthestmost southeast Nebraska. Moreover, for most people, these rural reservations are out of mind.

Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri, Prairie Band of the Pottawatomie, Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska – these communities

derive income from casino operations. These wells of wealth are shallow, and each Tribe wants to ensure a future that is not solely reliant on gaming. Nevertheless, the casinos provide income that, if carefully applied, fuels the betterment of Tribal members and helps secure reservations.

Each of these special places, with federally recognized, sovereign governments, has endured painfully difficult circumstances. These Tribes experienced decades of official depredations, ill-conceived policies and the breaking of covenants by the United States government.

Now, each reservation in

Kansas is vibrant with positive change. Tribal members celebrate an ethics of place. Environmental restoration is a priority. So, too, are education and health-care facilities. Tribal governments are improving these rural communities with a view toward the long-term future of the homeland.

The Kansas City District is becoming familiar with these modern reservation communities, the historical experiences of the Tribes and the plans each has for sustainable development. The District worked closely with each to develop a document to acquaint the staff with the Tribal governments, their cultures and their economies. It explains the work of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Native American Inter-governmental Relations Task Force, and the Tribal Policy Principles that the task force developed and the Corps adopted in 1998.

The principles recognize the special legal and political relationship the Indian Tribes have with the United States. The principles remind Corps commanders and employees that they are to confer with Tribes in a government-to-government relationship. The Corps is committed to build positive relationships with each sovereign Tribal government.

“The Tribes expect the Corps to manage consistent with the Federal trust responsibility to Indian Tribes,” the Missouri River Basin Tribes (Mni Sose) said (Programmatic Agreement, 2004). The trust doctrine is treaty-based on the cession of lands by the Indian nations in return for provision of services and entitlements by the

federal government.

Under the trust responsibility and the Corps principles, the Kansas City District confers with and considers the interests of each American Indian government in the process of determining how to protect, develop or make the fullest use of the Tribe's resources in accord with that Tribe's values and plans. The commander appointed Larry Myers as the Tribal liaison. This mission blends with Myers' District function as congressional liaison. He provides government-to-government services and links with members of Congress and Tribal government leaders and their respective staffs.

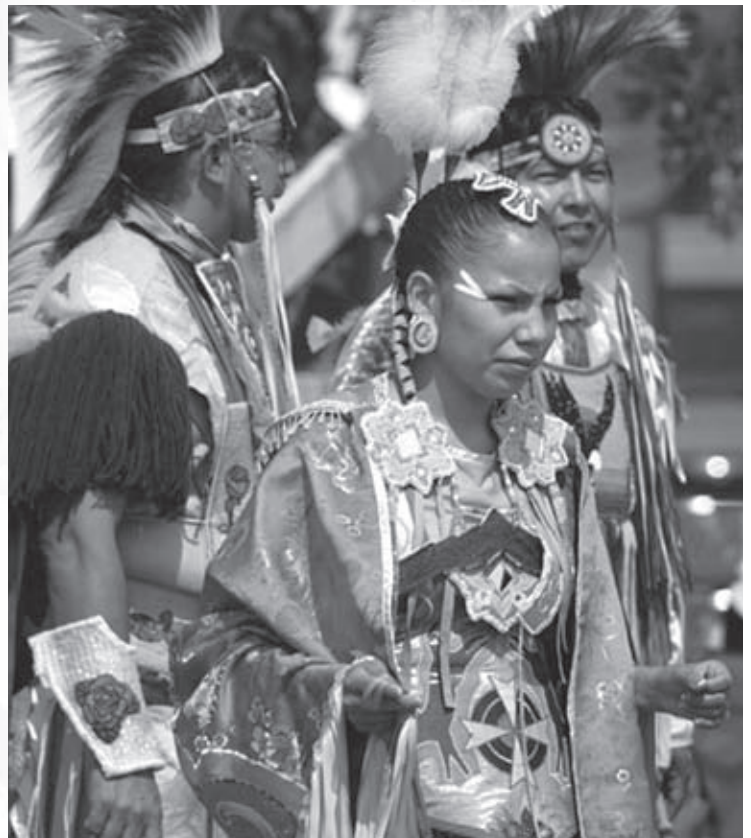
The District began its efforts to establish cooperative relationships with each Tribal government by requesting informal meetings. At these initial meetings, Myers explained that the mission of his office is to coordinate relationships between the Tribes and the District through outreach, education, consultation and advisory services. "We do not assume that we know what you want or need to hear from us," he said.

The Kansas City District's former commander, Col. Michael Rossi, met at least twice with each

Tribal government. He shared meals, participated in community ceremonies and personally represented the District to exchange Corps and Tribal flags. It is critical to the success of the American Indian participatory program that the District commander has face-to-face contacts with Tribal leaders. "Each time we meet, we get more out of it," said Chairman Steve Cadue with the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas. Current District Commander Col. Roger A. Wilson Jr., realizing the importance of the relationship, met with three of the four Tribal governments in fall 2007.

The Kansas City District confers with the tribes to promote mutual collaboration and establish pathways toward genuine partnership plans and project implementation. If there is a service within Corps authorities that a tribal government says it wants, then the District is prepared to perform its trust responsibility to the community.

Consistent with USACE Tribal Policy Principles, the Kansas City District seeks new challenges in partnership with each Tribal government that builds economic capacity and fosters abilities to manage Tribal resources, while preserving cultural identities and protecting sacred sites.



The Celebration Dance, where participants gather inside the friendship circle and do the dance of thanksgiving and gratefulness, takes place at the 2007 Iowa Tribe Pow Wow.

Photo by Harry Weddington

Around the District in three days



Col. Steven R. Miles (above), Northwestern Division commander, and Col. Roger A. Wilson, Kansas City District commander, talk with B.J. Watson, project engineer, at Custer Hill Beddown Facilities at Fort Riley. Photo by Bob Reinert

Division commander takes whirlwind tour of NWK

By Bob Reinert

During a busy three-day visit in late January, Col. Steven R. Miles, Northwestern Division commander, got a good look at the broad range of projects currently being undertaken by the Kansas City District.

From Jan. 30 to Feb. 1, Miles traveled around the district with Col. Roger A. Wilson Jr., district commander, and other district personnel. He received briefings from a variety of project managers

“You should all be proud of what you’re doing for the Army.”

*- Col. Steven R. Miles,
NWD Commander*

and engineers during his stay.

“It’s great to be able to go out here and go through all these facilities,” said Miles at one point during the visit. “You should all be proud of what you’re doing for the Army.”

Included in his visit were trips to Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth to view a number of the prominent military construction projects.

“What an amazing program,” said Miles after a briefing by Bob Kreienheder, area engineer, at Fort

Riley. "This is just one of the big dogs on the block."

During his tour of Fort Riley, Miles visited the Custer Hill Beddown Project and then walked through the \$50 million 1st Division Headquarters, which was completed in November 2007. Then it was off to see the near-total renovation of Marshall Army Air Field.

"It's amazing how it's a complete redoing of the Fort Riley aviation brigade," Miles said.

After the air field tour, Miles swung by the new Whitside Barracks complex under construction.

While he was at Fort Riley, Miles took a side trip to the Tuttle Creek Dam Safety Project. He received

briefings there from project manager Cindy Moses and Kathy Lust, resident engineer.

On Feb. 1, Miles met with the Leadership Development Program class, visited the District Offices and toured the ongoing construction on the 10th and 14th floors of the Richard Bolling Federal Building with David Glandon, resource manager.

Miles also received a Fort Leonard Wood project briefing from Eric Arndt, area engineer. Then it was back on the road to Fort Leavenworth, for a project briefing from David Manka at the impressive Lewis and Clark Complex.



Clockwise from top, Col. Miles looks at stained glass display at Fort Leavenworth Lewis & Clark Complex with David Manka, project manager; receives a briefing from Bob Kreienheder, area engineer, at Fort Riley; meets with Kathy Lust, resident engineer, at Tuttle Creek Dam; and shares a lighter moment with Manka.

Photos by Bob Reinert



Navigating through challenging times

Corps leadership speaks at annual meeting, warns of a ninth straight dry season



By Bob Reinert

Yet another year of drought may shorten the upcoming navigation season on the Missouri River, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers leaders told those assembled Feb. 14 in Kansas City for the annual Missouri River Mainstem System U.S. Coast Guard, Corps of Engineers and Navigators Coordination Meeting.

“We anticipate another dry year, No. 9 in a row,” said Col. Steven R. Miles, Northwestern Division commander, in his remarks. “We can’t simply talk about water in isolation today. We have to talk about it in an integrated and balanced manner.”

Miles pointed out that, in addition to maintaining navigation channels, the Corps must improve the safety and reliability of national levees, be concerned about endangered species, provide for hydropower, recreation and flood-damage control and ensure water supply and quality.

"We are committed and dedicated to the work that we are doing with the navigation caucus in a transparent and collaborative manner to develop solutions to this increasingly complex environment that we continue to operate in," Miles said. "We must build bridges of compromise in order to (advance) our joint interests."

Miles, who heads a division with a \$3 billion budget spread across 12 states, said he welcomed the opportunity to attend the navigators meeting.

"It gives us an opportunity to talk about water together, even when we may not see things eye to eye. We must come together and achieve a shared understanding if we're going to make joint progress."

Prior to Miles' remarks, Col. Roger A. Wilson Jr., Kansas City District commander, spoke about events of the previous year on the Lower Missouri River. He mentioned the May and July floods, limitations on sand dredging and a 2007 navigation season shortened by drought.

"Through these events, I've learned a great deal," said Wilson, who took command of the district in July 2007. "I've learned, first, that the Kansas City District is not perfect, but we are adaptive. And we are listening to you."

Wilson said that in 2007 the district performed critical maintenance on 38 structures along

the Missouri between river miles 50 and 331. He added that it was a 37 percent increase over the previous year.

"We remain committed to remain shoulder to shoulder with those interest groups along the Missouri – those stakeholders – to help work with you and meet these challenges on a day-to-day basis," Wilson said.

Larry Murphy of the Omaha District gave a water management update after Miles and Wilson spoke, and Mike George followed with a Missouri River Recovery Program update. George referred to a national survey of youths ages 10-14.

"We can't simply talk about water in isolation today. We have to talk about it in an integrated and balanced manner ... We must build bridges of compromise in order to (advance) our joint interests."

*– Col. Steven R. Miles
NWD Commander*

"Their No. 1 concern – way ahead of everything else – was the environment," George said. "The reality is, in 10 years these kids are going to be voters."

George, the MRRP manager, said the challenge along the Missouri River was balancing the environment and navigation, as federal law requires.

"We have to find a way that we can have both," said George,

adding that the Corps had spent \$30 million developing shallow water habitat for pallid sturgeon, one of three species identified as endangered along the river.

"We don't think it's impacting your navigation negatively," said George of the habitat development. "If it is, we need to hear about it."

George also reported that efforts to help the endangered least tern and piping plover continue and have shown positive results.

Speaking on the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee, Rose Hargrave of the Omaha District talked of the challenges and opportunities present in the basin.

"The stakeholders in our basin want to take an active part and a proactive part in the recovery," Hargrave said. "We're really hoping that MRRIC will be an alternate means of problem-solving in the basin."

George called MRRIC "an absolutely huge success story so far. It really is an attempt to change how we do business on the basin. MRRIC is really an attempt to create a collaborative process on the river."

Miles pointed out that the president's budget request announced in February provided \$85 million for recovery work. He added, however, that the final figure was likely to be closer to the \$51 million received last year.

"Every day presents a new and awesome challenge to all of us," Miles said. "We know that not all of our stakeholders are going to be happy every day, all the time. We know that. But we hope in the end we will be seen as an honest broker, doing what is best for our country as a whole."





Attendees at the eighth annual Northwestern Division Wildlife Workshop hosted by the Kansas City District gather around the skylight entrance to the Beck Bat Cave, a “maternity cave” at Truman Lake for the federally endangered gray bat. Photo by Mike Watkins

Truman Lake

hosts eighth annual Northwestern Division Wildlife Workshop

By Bob Reinert

WARSAW – When it all began eight years ago, a handful of wildlife biologists huddled in a hotel room for two days.

“We just exchanged philosophies, theories,” said Mike Watkins, wildlife biologist for the Kansas City District. “We each gave a presentation on our district on different projects that were being done.

“We had just become a division. We really didn’t have much idea what they did, and they didn’t have much idea of what we did.”

How times have changed.

More than two dozen Corps of Engineers wildlife biologists, natural resource specialists and park rangers attended the eighth annual Northwest Division Wildlife Workshop, which took place March 4-6 at the Truman Lake Visitors' Center.

"I was pleased with how the workshop went," said Paul Ocker, interim NWD biologist. "We had people from every district."

The first day featured a full slate of presentations from different speakers. They spoke on a wide range of subjects: invasive plants, weed management, quail habitat development, feral hogs, migratory birds, wetland habitat management, creating emergent sandbar habitat, relocating adult terns to developed nesting habitat, relocating least tern chicks to adjacent habitat, the western pond turtle, the history of prairie management in the Kansas City District, bringing public awareness to the Corps' stewardship program and managing habitat for elk mitigation in Idaho.

"You can always learn from somebody else if they've gone through a particular problem," Watkins said. "Even though it might be a different region, a lot of the strategies for controlling it might be similar."

Ocker also pointed to the value of "trying to learn from each other ... especially at a time when budgets aren't getting any bigger."

On the second day of the workshop, participants headed outdoors. In the morning, they toured the Missouri Department of Conservation Fish Hatchery, viewed Bald eagle nesting territory and visited Avery Marsh. After a wild game lunch at the Pomme de Terre Project Office, it was back outdoors to the Riviera South Fish Habitat Installation, the Bolivar Landing Wildlife Area and, finally, the Beck Bat Cave.

"People were pretty happy with what they got to see," Watkins said. "Just seeing what's going on in the field has a bigger impression a lot of times than just a PowerPoint presentation."

"I kind of apologized about the weather and the mud, and they were like, 'Great, strap on the boots, let's go,'" Watkins said. "Not an issue."

The morning of March 6 was spent back inside the Truman Lake Visitors Center. Participants heard presentations on the use of sportsman's shows as a marketing strategy for the Corps' environmental and recreation messages, innovative mitigation

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Rich Abdolar, natural resource specialist at Truman Lake, talks to workshop attendees at the Avery Wetlands Project.

Photo by Mike Watkins

The morning of March 6 was spent back inside the Truman Lake Visitors Center. Participants heard presentations on the use of sportsman's shows as a marketing strategy for the Corps' environmental and recreation messages, innovative mitigation and marketing strategies to benefit wildlife habitat, and invasive aquatic species. The conference ended with a roundtable discussion of where the Division's wildlife management program goes from here.

According to Watkins, it became apparent during the roundtable discussion how big a problem invasive species, such as plants, feral hogs and zebra mussels, posed.

"You realize you're not going to probably eradicate invasive species," Watkins said. "There's always going to be something coming in. Those are the kind of things you have to keep up on. I see that as a huge, huge challenge."

Watkins said the biologists strive to look at new issues when they meet each year.

"There always are new issues to deal with," Watkins said. "It's a combination of both, really – new issues and ongoing issues that need to be addressed."

The attendees felt this year's conference was beneficial, said Watkins.

"The interaction, the networking that's done, the information exchange is just too valuable not to do it once a year," said Watkins, adding that attendees trade "ideas, problems, challenges and, hopefully, some success stories."

Project managers and rangers at the lakes are to be credited with successes in the District, Watkins pointed out.

"I do what I can to help them, but they're the ones who get the work done," Watkins said. "The Kansas City District has one of the best natural resource management programs – definitely in the Division and certainly, I hope, in the country."



Allen Braudes, aquaculture biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation, explains the operation of the Lost Valley Fish Hatchery in Warsaw.

*Photo by
Mike Watkins*

A Salute to the Armed Forces

Kansas City District Office takes part at Kansas Capitol

TOPEKA, Kan. – The Kansas City District took part in Armed Forces Appreciation Day Feb. 28 at the Kansas State Capitol in Topeka.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and numerous military units set up displays in the first-floor rotunda. Maj. James R. Lockridge II, deputy resident engineer at Fort Riley, and Tom Simmons, Environmental IIS program manager, manned the District display. They gave out such handy items as measuring tapes, whistles, floating key holders and pens.

The day began with the house of representatives and senate convening. The Tuskegee Airmen and the Governor's Military Council were recognized in both chambers.

Governor Katherine Sebelius signed proclamations with the Tuskegee Airmen and military base commanders from Kansas.

The Commanding General's Mounted Color Guard made an appearance on the south side of the state capitol building. During lunch, the 35th Division Brass Quintet of the Kansas Army National Guard performed.

In the afternoon, the Governor's Military Council Meeting was held in the Hayden Office Building, across the street from the capitol.



Clockwise from top: Major James R. Lockridge II and Tom Simmons meet with members of the public at the Kansas State Capitol Feb. 28 during Armed Forces Appreciation Day; Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius signs proclamation with base commanders; and the 35th Division Brass Quintet performs.

Photos by Bob Reinert, Tom Simmons and Kansas Governor's Office



From Iraq . . . to Kansas City



Iraqi engineer Zeravan Abdul-Jabbar, center, met with Kansas City District leadership during a visit to the district office on March 14. Abdul-Jabbar will work at Fort Leavenworth for six months as part of an engineering exchange program. He is joined by, from left, Larry Myers, executive assistant, Maj. (P) Michael F. Fitzgerald, deputy engineer, Col. Roger A. Wilson Jr., district engineer, and Christina Hoffman, program manager, Middle East & North Africa, for Peace and Prosperity through International Science Collaboration.